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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [OSCI](#) [KSCA](#) [KHIV](#) [MI](#)

SUBJECT: POST RESPONSE - REQUEST FOR ASSESSMENT OF FOREIGN POLICY  
IMPLICATIONS OF A PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT NO. AI050410 INVOLVING A  
FOREIGN INSTITUTION

REF: STATE 146782

¶1. (U) Summary: Post thanks the Department for the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed research project No. AI050410 "Acceptability of male circumcision as part of HIV prevention strategies in Malawi" -Amy Corneli. Post concurs with the spirit of the project and has no objection to it; however we would like to record our reservations regarding implications of the proposal, particularly regarding any premature inclusion of male circumcision (MC) in a national HIV prevention program. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Post believes that this research project, conducted as formative research, would cause no harm in Malawi and could help further the study of male circumcision worldwide. Several countries in the region have conducted formative research on the acceptability of male circumcision. Also, researchers affiliated with the Ministry of Health have conducted similar research in Malawi. The findings were published in May 2006: "Acceptability of Male Circumcision for Prevention of HIV Infection in Malawi"; Ngalande RC, Levy J, Kapondo CPN, and Bailey RC; AIDS Behav.

¶3. (U) However, the stated objective of the research, "to generate relevant data to inform future initiatives to implement male circumcision as part of a comprehensive HIV strategy in Malawi" raises some concerns. A premature recommendation for inclusion of male circumcision as a strategy in Malawi's national prevention program could result, in part, from this study.

This would be problematic due to the following:

- The Malawi DHS+ survey presents apparently contradicting results to the prevailing protective value of male circumcision
- The role of confounders and effect modifiers attributing the protective value of male circumcision have still not been fully resolved (issues of culture, religion, ethnicity, occupation, condom use, type of MC etc.)
- Other definitive prospective studies are underway in Kenya and Uganda. Results from those studies may advise future use of MC in any prevention strategy
- Existing proven HIV prevention interventions are barely being operationalized and a focus on MC may detract from and even undermine getting the other prevention efforts in place.
- Any future consideration of male circumcision should not only await consensus position statements by reputable international organizations such as WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, it should also be fully endorsed by the Malawi Ministry of Health and the National AIDS

Commission.

14. (U) For any further questions regarding post's concerns over this matter, you may contact Austin Demby, CDC Director, ademby@mw.cdc.gov, +265-1-775-188.

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